

BRAP BEAT

Results of Week 2

By Kent Bramlett



The second week has produced real progress and advancement of our understanding in each of the three areas.

The Qasr team removed the 1st century AD pavement and exposure layers discovered the first week to get at older layers below. Two later walls, much smaller than the Qasr's construction style began to emerge from the debris layers. Of particular interest was the earth layer between the Qasr and the nearest new wall. This layer could possibly provide some temporal information about the construction or use dates of the Qasr. The pottery coming from this layer seemed to date from the Iron IIB period, mostly from the 8th century BC. In this earth layer, right between the uppermost-

preserved wall stones of the adjacent new wall, we found a neck and rim pottery piece from a Cypro-Geometric vessel. This style is quite well known and confirms a date of no earlier than the 8th century BC for the deposition of this layer. Now the surprise. The team tentatively identified a foundation trench that cut through this layer in which the Qasr wall stones were laid at the time of its construction. However, there is a lot of animal burrowing (called bioturbation) near the wall, with one tunnel large



enough for a fox, so we must dig below this to confirm or disprove our suspicions. If further excavation proves it to be a foundation trench and not just animal burrowing, then this would provide us an important *terminus post quem* (point after which) for the construction of the Qasr. It wouldn't tell us that the construction date is exactly at that time, but sometime after that time. Is it Iron IIC or Persian in date? However, nearly all the pottery coming from the layers below the Nabataean pavement is Iron Age making the case for an Iron Age construction date of the Qasr. In the remaining time the team needs to dig deeper below the animal disturbances to the founding level of the structure and determine whether the Iron IIB layer fell against (and is thus later) or was trenched for the foundation of the Qasr (and therefore was earlier). Stay tuned!



Work over at the **House** moved rapidly. Expansion of the previously excavated area is providing much better exposure and a picture of what happened to this building. Parts of two rooms were opened up and the wall that divided them has given us dramatic insight into the last moments of life in this house. This wall runs roughly north-south and had collapsed, producing a pile of wall stones and rubble mostly on the west side. But the courses near the base were shifted eastward. This is strong evidence of an earthquake emanating from the direction of the Great Rift Valley just to the west with the shockwave traveling eastward and shifting the base of the wall off its foundations to the east. However, the stationary inertial momentum of the upper wall would cause it to lag behind the motion of the lower portion and it collapsed backwards on the west side. Earthquake destructions are archaeologically interesting to excavate because they tend to preserve much

more of what was in the house than either abandonment (most things were taken with) or attack (usually looting would occur before burning the place down). Sure enough, as the earthquake destruction layers (5 feet thick on average) were removed, the team began to find the contents of

the house. Four large storage jars were broken by the collapse of the wall, but two were still standing with only the tops crushed in. Two circular bins contained more pottery and in the other room a cooking pot was discovered in the vicinity of a rectangular bin. Many grindstones were pulled from the rubble and even a cosmetic palette was among the finds. We look forward to clarifying the sequence of floors associated with this architecture and doing a probe below this house to discover if earlier periods exist here.



The Wall team worked hard this week to gain stratigraphic depth. As they cleared the top of the wall it became clear that earlier walls did indeed run across the passage thus blocking it at lower, earlier levels. So the passage was just associated with the later phase when the towers were built over an earlier fortification system. But what did the earlier fortification system consist of? Martin spent the week excavating on the eastern outside face of the wall in an attempt to reach the founding level, or at least learn more about the depth of the

wall and the date of the layers running up against it. He has excavated two meters down and is still turning up Iron II pottery.

Up on top, the team has discovered that the wall is actually two parallel walls and thus looks like a casemate construction. The space between the two walls would usually be divided up by short cross-walls into rooms. The cross-walls on top almost look like casemate dividers but they only date to the later phase and don't continue down. Thus we don't know how long the room is and excavated just in the available space. A number of grindstones have turned up in the fill debris and it is beginning to look like we are coming down on a destruction layer filling the space between the two walls. Possibly this is contemporary with the House being excavated, but we don't know that for sure yet. Maybe the team will reach an occupational surface during the next week.



Social Call to an Ottoman House

By Monique Vincent

Yousef, the guard for our team, invited us to visit his father-in-law's old house in the nearby village of Adir. An Ottoman-era stone house, the building dates back into the reaches of family history and currently stands as a curiosity filled with mementos of earlier centuries. Wooden forks and sieves used for separating the chaff from the wheat, donkey collars, ceramic jars, a stone mortar and pestle, and a wooden threshing sledge



that would have been drawn by oxen all rest inside the large main room of the structure, while a side room hosted the original kitchen. Youssef's sister-in-law, recently graduated with her degree in archaeology and tourism, explained the old house and its implements to the team. She pointed out how the old house was part of a larger continuous structure, where three different households once built their homes adjacent to each other. The courtyards of each opened onto a shared space in front, now separated by dividing walls. The team members enjoyed exploring the past and then walked through a grape arbor to join the family in the courtyard of their modern home for Arabic coffee, tea, and sweets.



Journey into the Past

By Dawn Acevedo

This past Saturday a group of students ventured to see some of the great archaeological discoveries in Jordan, starting at the Amman citadel. This museum houses a surprisingly wide variety of objects from Paleolithic up to the Umayyad and Abbasid eras. Of course we were first greeted by the colossal pillars of the 2nd century CE Temple of Hercules - wow! After



exploring the citadel museum and the Umayyad palace that overlook the bustling streets of Amman, we left for our second stop: the Jordan Museum. This, too, houses a wide collection of Paleolithic to Islamic artifacts, including a wonderful arrangement of Nabatean objects and architectural fragments, Byzantine elements from the Petra Church, and Qumran's Copper Scroll!



After a special lunch of pizza and Gerard's Ice Cream (yum!), it was off to Jerash. Immediately we came upon Hadrian's arch, followed soon after by the hippodrome, theater, Temple of Zeus, and the famous Oval Forum. We hurried down to the Temple of Artemis where we were fortunate to get to explore the vaulted chambers below the temple platform. Then it was off to Ajlun Castle in the north! This Ayyubid castle is fun to explore! After a number of photo-ops and making our way through the maze of rooms, we made the 3.5-hour drive back to the dig house, including a scenic drive southward along the eastern shore of the Dead Sea.

Neolithic to Ottoman Archaeologists

Every dig season is an experience in diversity for the entire team. There is a mix of national origins, of religious beliefs, and of cultural backgrounds. During the 2012 season, BRAP team members came from Germany, the USA, Argentina, Serbia, France, and Jordan. This season team members come from the USA, Germany, and Chile.

Our Jordanian workmen, however, love trying to guess our ages (it's the second question after "What's your name?"). When they found out that Audrey Shaffer, a spry and experienced digger, is 87, they were very surprised. Then they turned to Walla Walla University student Noah Bos, who is on a dig for the first time, and found out he turned 18 a little over a month ago. Where the rest of us fall in between keeps them guessing!

